

The Exterior

Situated between the Seine and the forest of St Germain-en-Laye, the château was designed as the centrepiece of a landscaping project oriented towards its views. In the 19th century, it was cut off from its park and stables.

This building, with its symmetry and orchestrated spaces, was a precursor to Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles. The facades are harmoniously proportioned and have a balanced composition thanks to the hierarchical arrangement of the Doric*, Ionic* and Corinthian* pilasters*. The decoration combines Classical and heraldic references.

- 18 The Courtyard Facade** consists of a central building with pavilions on each side, each with a large raked slate roof. These, in turn, are extended with two low pavilions on to the terrace.
- 19 The Garden Facade** is perfectly symmetrical, with lateral porticos framing the central projecting section.

The 18th century Gate came from the Château de Mailly-Raineval. It was saved and installed thanks to the Finnish painter Grommé, the château's last private owner.

Glossary

Canting Arms: coats of arms that represent the bearer's name in a visual pun or rebus.

Coffered ceiling: ceiling with recessed compartments.

Corinthian Order: capital decorated with acanthus leaves.

Doric Order: first Greek order, simple restrained style.

François Mansart (1598-1666): a French architect, main precursor of classical architecture in France. He trained his nephew and heir, Jules Hardouin-Mansart, one of the architects of the Palace of Versailles.

Marquetry: a decorative assembly of precious woods (or materials).

Ionic Order: capital decorated with lateral volutes.

Pilaster: rectangular pillar projecting from a wall.

Stucco: a decorative wall covering made of plaster or marble dust and glue, imitating marble.

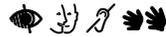
Term: in sculpture, a statue of a man whose body supports an architectural element, and tapers down to a plinth.

Practical information

Average length of visit: 1 ½ hours.

Audio guides available in French, English, German, Spanish and Dutch.

Guided tours at weekends.



Gift and book shop

The guide for this monument can be found in the *Itinéraires* collection and is available in the gift and book shop.

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Château de Maisons

English



François Mansart's* Masterpiece

The best conserved work by the architect François Mansart*, the Château de Maisons, was described by Charles Perrault as being: "of such singular beauty that there is not a curious foreigner who does not go there to see it as one of the finest things that we have in France." Built around



1640 for René de Longueil, a high-ranking judge at the Parlement de Paris, the Château de Maisons embodies the transition between late Renaissance and Classicism.

Prestigious guests

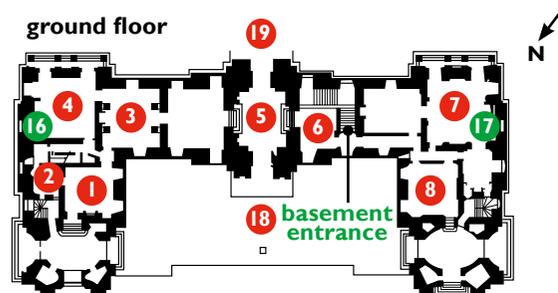
Owned by the Longueil family until 1777, the estate was bought by the Comte d'Artois, the future Charles X. During the Empire (1804), it belonged to Jean Lannes, one of Napoleon's Marshals, before being sold in 1818 to the banker Jacques Laffitte, who, following bankruptcy in 1834, was forced to divide the park into lots.

There was a succession of owners from 1850 until 1905, when the French State bought back the château, saving this model of classical architecture from destruction.

Known for its splendour, the château has hosted great names in the history of France, including Louis XIV, Anne of Austria, Mazarin, Louis XV, Voltaire, Napoleon and Lafayette.

* Explanations overleaf

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The ground floor

The Captives' Apartment

This five-room apartment was originally designed for René de Longueuil, who commissioned the château.

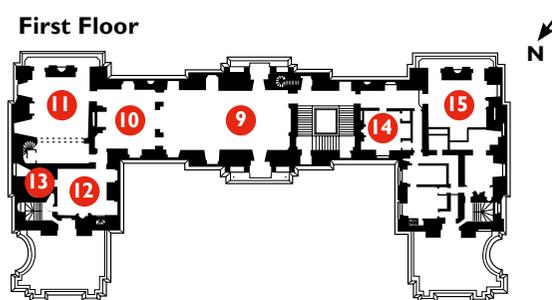
- 1 **The Print Room**, previously a toilet, exhibits engravings, drawings and models showing the evolution of the château.
- 2 **The Study**, the most intimate room in the apartment, is adorned with a painted coffered ceiling* depicting the virtues of a high-ranking magistrate (knowledge, wisdom, honour, clemency).
- 3 **The Antechamber**, refurbished in the 18th century, presents portraits of the last owners of the château.
- 4 **The Captives' Room**, a state room that owes its name to the decoration on the fireplace carved by Gilles Guérin as a tribute to the victories of King Louis XIII.

5 The Grand Entrance Hall

This main entrance was decorated with columns bearing the initials of René de Longueuil and his wife, Madeleine Boulenc de Crèvecoeur. On the ceiling, the eagles are a reference to the Longueuil canting arms*: eagles have keen eyesight or a "long eye" (*long oeil* in French); the bas-reliefs depict the four elements: Water (Neptune), Earth (Cybele), Air (Juno) and Fire (Jupiter).

6 The Grand Staircase

Consisting of four "suspended" flights around a central opening, this type of staircase, still somewhat rare, was popularised in Paris by Mansart*.



Set under a domed ceiling, it is decorated with Ionic* pilasters* and groups of cherubs representing the Arts, Music, Love, Peace and War.

The Fame Apartment

Intended for the mistress of the house, the apartment takes its name from a fireplace decoration that has now disappeared. With four rooms, it was refurbished by François Joseph Bélanger on the orders of the Comte d'Artois between 1777 and 1784.

- 7 **The Comte d'Artois' Dining Room** is decorated with statues of the four seasons produced by Foucou, Boizot, Clodion and Houdon. The coffered ceiling* is the work of Nicolas Lhuillier, one of the first in France to introduce ornamentation inspired by Classical motifs (rinceaux, rams, griffins, etc). The cane chair commissioned from Georges Jacob, is one of the surviving pieces of the Comte d'Artois' furniture.
- 8 **The Stucco* Room**, with alternating sculpted decorations and mirrors, served as a games room and as a dining room in winter.

First Floor

The King's Apartment

This area, made up of five rooms, was called the "Italian style apartment" because of the inset domes which, in 1658, replaced the coffered, "French-style" ceiling* of 1646.

- 9 **The Great Hall** is decorated with wood panelling and trompe l'oeil paintings. Its size, its decoration, its natural light and its musicians' gallery make it a prestigious reception room. Italian landscapes

installed in the 19th century replaced the original tapestries.

- 10 **The Antechamber** focuses its decoration around the fireplace, with the Longueuil coat of arms and the portrait of Louis XIV. The movable baluster enables the space to be enlarged.
- 11 **The King's Bedchamber** is majestic, with its inset cupolas, original woodblock floor and barrel-vaulted alcove.
- 12 **The Italian-style Study** has a large cupola decorated with terms* inspired by Italian palaces.
- 13 **The Mirror Room**, an exquisitely refined yet intimate room, has a cupola decorated by Michel Corneille, wood panelling and a parquet floor inlaid with bone and tin* marquetry.

The Apartment of the Eagles

The apartment takes its name from a fireplace decoration that has now disappeared. It was refurbished in the 19th century.

- 14 **The Laffitte Room** contains furniture from the Restoration and Louis-Philippe periods. It evokes the bourgeois interiors of the mid 19th century.
- 15 **The Maréchal Lannes Room** is decorated in the Empire style.

The Basement

- 16 **The Baths Room**, originally designed for receiving visitors and linked to the apartments of the King and the owner, was transformed into a kitchen in the 19th century. The original bath can be seen behind the bread oven.
- 17 **The kitchen** has a broad fireplace and a sink with running water, a rare luxury at the time. It was preceded by a second kitchen and an office.